

judging from the events of 1382, the seculars would at least have protected free discussion, and perhaps have made Oxford the centre of an educated and cultivated Lollardry. It would be hard to over-rate the importance of such a movement in a town where a large proportion both of the parish priests and of the unbeneficed clerks were trained. So many of the English clergy were from Oxford that the revolt of the seculars there in 1382 gravely threatened clerical orthodoxy throughout England. Oxford had all the advantages which Cambridge possessed, when Cambridge became the focus of Protestant thought in the sixteenth century. But the action of the King and Bishops closed the University against Wycliffe and consigned him to his parish. We have shown reason for suspecting that he himself did not greatly regret the change, and that his interest in the place of learning was not, at the critical moment, as deep as it should have been.

It would, however, be wrong to suppose that Oxford became at once a Catholic seminary. Up to the end of Henry the Fourth's reign, at least, certain dangers attended the education of the faithful there. About 1409 a revival of free thought led to a sharp struggle, in which the University was again worsted. Among other measures taken to gag opinion, the publication of books was subjected to severe censorship, the establishment of which * proved an effectual check on the literary productiveness of Oxford for several generations.¹ The continued growth of the collegiate system throughout the fifteenth century further strengthened the hold of the Church on the young men. Although in many local centres Lollardry survived until the later Reformation, we hear no more of it at Oxford, and even in the sixteenth century it was Cambridge that led the way.

Though the interests of Wycliffism proved in the long run to have been materially injured by the events we have just recorded, the growth of the new doctrines throughout the country was at first rather stimulated than checked by the

¹ Sir H. C. Maxwell Lyte's *History of Oxford*, 278-85; and Wilkins, iii, 823 and 339.